



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

State Moves to Ban Synthetic Drugs Known as "Bath Salts"

Baltimore, MD (July 21, 2011)-The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) today announced plans to ban the sale of synthetic drugs known as "bath salts" by adding them to the Schedule 1 Controlled Dangerous Substances list. This action follows a period of investigation and public comment that revealed "bath salts" to pose a significant threat to public health.

"Maryland is taking this step to prevent death and disability from these dangerous compounds," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "We cannot afford to let these substances threaten our youth."

"Bath salts" can be inhaled, ingested, smoked or injected. Users may develop cardiac and circulatory disturbances, agitation, delirium, paranoia and psychosis. There have been cases reported nationwide in which users have attempted to inflict injury on themselves or others. The agitation and delirium may persist for days to weeks. In Maryland, the poison control center is aware of 22 cases of poisoning, including one death.

"Our investigation revealed that so-called 'bath salts' are dangerous drugs," said DHMH Secretary Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D. "I have requested that emergency regulations be promulgated to ban the sale of these substances in our State."

As part of the investigation, DHMH received comments from a number of individuals including elected officials, physicians, and family members of users of bath salts. These included reports of severe consequences and dangers resulting from the use of bath salts.

In addition, the Department reached out to all of the local health departments to determine the availability of bath salts in Maryland. The availability was low; with just about 1 in 100 stores visited selling the products.

"Once again, the manufacturers of illegal drugs are attempting to circumvent current laws by producing a substance with no medicinal purpose and many harmful side effects," Maryland State Police Superintendent Colonel Terrence B. Sheridan said. "I commend Secretary Sharfstein and his staff for their prompt review and their swift action to prohibit

this dangerous substance in Maryland. This action will hopefully help us to prevent some of the tragedies already experienced in other states."

Under Maryland law, Section 5-202(b) of the Criminal Law Article allows the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (the "Department") to add substances to the schedules of controlled dangerous substance "[i]n accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act."

This could go into effect as early as September 1, 2011.

For more information on the investigation and 'bath salts,' visit www.dhmh.maryland.gov and click on "Bath Salts" under Hot Topics.

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